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ABSTRACT

Recommendations are presented for a new form of school governance in British Columbia that takes into account current research on effective schools. In the model described, the provincial government provides the funding, sets the core curriculum, standards, and outcomes, ensures standardized measurement and reporting, and supports field research. School boards set district goals, distribute funds on an equitable basis, operate school facilities, implement school-based management and open enrollment plans, provide incentives for performance, and measure and report achievement results for the community. Individual schools are empowered to deliver programs enabling students to make the most rapid progress toward district and provincial goals. Elected school councils have decision-making authority, while day-to-day management is carried out by school administration. Schools control their own shares of district budget based on enrollment, with special needs funding accompanying special needs students. The implications of this policy framework, which provides for performance-based local autonomy, are discussed. These include reduced bureaucracy, redirected funding, increased integration of services, more flexibility and choice, enhanced local decision making, and improved accountability. Recommendations are made to implement these new roles and responsibilities. (Contains 15 references.) (SLD)

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A Review of Roles and Responsibilities:

Restructuring for Excellence in the School System

Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, April 1997

I. Introduction

Public schools face increasing challenges to successfully prepare all students for the knowledge society of the new economy.

The world has changed rapidly, forcing all institutions to rethink the way they do business. It is time to re-define the nature of effective relationships among different levels of the school system.

New governance models embody the thrust of current research on effective schools: a flattened bureaucracy, local decision-making and accountability for results.

These recommendations are grounded both in research and successful practice, and build on the strong commitment of British Columbia to excellence in education.

II. Overview

New Roles and Responsibilities

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- **Provincial government provides funding, sets core curriculum, standards and outcomes, ensures standardized measurement and reporting, and supports field research.**

- **School boards set district goals, distribute funds on an equitable basis to schools, operate school facilities and necessary district support services, implement school-based management and open enrollment plans, provide incentives for performance and intervention where schools are failing, and measure and report achievement results to the community.**

- **Individual schools are empowered to deliver programs enabling their students to make most rapid progress towards district and provincial goals. Each school develops a mission and unique focus within established curriculum and performance standards. Elected school councils representing all stakeholders have decision-making authority, while day to day management is carried out by school administration. Schools control their share of district budget based on enrollment, with special needs funding accompanying special needs students. Services and instructional support are purchased directly from the most economical source, not necessarily from the district. Schools may contract with other agencies to provide needed programs to assist students become successful learners. Schools attract students based on the strength of their programs, and no school may discriminate on the basis of race, gender, or handicapping conditions.**

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III. Implications

This model provides an over-arching policy framework which emphasizes new principles for a successful education system: performance-based, local autonomy, increased flexibility and choices, incentives to innovate, enhanced professionalism and eliminating the gap between high and low-performing schools.

Some of the major implications are as follows:

- **Reduced Bureaucracy**

  The entire administrative structure would shrink in this model. The role of the ministry would be further streamlined. The role of school boards changes to enabling and monitoring. Boards maintain overall fiscal and quality control and provide required core support services. Many functions now performed by district staff would be devolved to the school level as school-based management practices are implemented. The burden of effective delivery of services within the allotted resources, moves to the individual school, where the people who are most impacted make the decisions and are held accountable for results. Highly autonomous and accountable, schools set goals, allocate their resources most effectively, measure results and innovate to serve their students better.

- **Redirected Funding**

  The model will provide increased funds to support instruction. Savings will be generated from a streamlined ministry, reduced district administration and site-based management economies. Additional revenue and economies will be generated by expanding community partnership programs with a results-based focus. The cost-effectiveness of all programs will be assessed in terms of increased student performance.

- **Increased Integration of Services**

  The social problems faced by many schools today require increased support from social service agencies. Where there was a demand, community schools could offer much longer days and operate throughout the school year to provide a healthier learning environment.

"The solution to educational problems is not more money, but rather changes within the institutional framework that results in improvements in how the available financial resources are spent, and a clear focus on academic achievement in the schools as a top priority."
International Comparisons in Education (ACR, 1992)

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"Real power-sharing is essential if partnerships in education are to become more effective."

(Fair Schools. 1995 Ombudsman's Report)

for disadvantaged students. Social and health services needed to overcome non-academic barriers to learning could be offered through the school by contracting with various agencies. In addition, cost sharing of school facilities, joint-ownership and shared use of space and technology must become part of the collaboration with the community to provide education more cost-effectively. School programs can be offered in a wide variety of non-traditional settings to meet new needs.

- **Increased Flexibility and Choice**

  Confidence in public school performance could be bolstered by open boundary enrollment policies, while holding all schools to high performance standards. Districts could stimulate creation of more learning options for disadvantaged students or those not presently succeeding in the system. This would foster innovative delivery of programs, and provide a broader range of services and models to meet differing learning styles and expectations. School staffing procedures would be based on building effective school teams with cohesive philosophies, expertise and practices around each school's mission.

- **Enhanced Local Decision-making**

  Decision-making powers at the school site level will be increased through the mechanism of school councils. Through the elected council, the school professionals, parents, students and community collaborate in the decision-making on all matters of school operation. School councils would be provided necessary training to engage in leadership for continuous school improvement: setting goals, allocating resources to meet those goals, and monitoring results. School councils will expand the ability of front-line professionals, parents and community to have an impact on the decisions that concern them and their children.

School-Based Management

- *gives the entire school community a voice in key decisions*
- *focuses accountability for decisions*
- *redirects the resources to support school goals*
- *leads to realistic budgeting and prioritizing of goals*
- *empowers teachers, improves morale*
- *nurtures leadership at all levels*
- *increases parental satisfaction and active support for learning*

American Association of School Administrators

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- **Improved Accountability**

"We are not operating near our potential. Evidence that schools are grossly underperforming organizations surrounds us. Evidence shows that schools can and will improve if they strive for increasingly better results by examining and refining the processes that most directly contribute to designated results."

Schmoker (1996)Results

The school-based management model presupposes clear performance standards established by the ministry, and standardized methods at the district level for measuring results at every grade on an annual basis at both elementary and secondary levels. Districts and schools shift to managing for outcomes, not inputs. They ensure measurement and reporting of school achievement and other key indicators as annual report cards to the community. (The North York school district provides an excellent model.)

District accountability is maintained through the overall fiscal and quality control exercised and reported to the ministry and the community annually. Boards would be responsible for intervening in failing schools, replacing administrative leadership or unsuccessful programs and personnel. They would encourage the replication of highly successful programs.

Accountability for individual schools will include student achievement, fiscal management, and the ability to attract parents and students and teachers. Academic results and other significant indicators would be published in proper context in annual school report cards for the community. Particular emphasis is placed on *value added* statistics, improvements over the achievement scores of the previous year. Student enrollment, parent satisfaction and the ability to attract quality staff will be other important measures of success. School-based responsibility for budget decisions would mean the ability to roll-over both surplus or deficit, ensuring long-term planning to strengthen school programs.

What levels of performance do you wish your students to achieve?
What are your strategies to ensure students achieve them?
What changes in pedagogy and services will you introduce to reach your targets?

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IV. Implementing the Change Process

New roles and responsibilities must be carefully articulated and supported by the ministry and school districts, particularly during the transition period. The following will need to be addressed:

"The trend to school-based management ....should be reviewed by government as it redefines administrative roles and responsibilities in education in B.C."
Judy Korbin, Commissioner of Inquiry into Public Sector, 1993

- **Formation of School Councils**

  The definition and authority of school councils must be spelled out by the Minister. Functions of the school council may include:

  -development of annual goals consistent with broad goals of ministry and school board
  -establishment of program priorities within the framework of provincial policy
  -review of school curriculum
  -evaluation of programs, procedures and facilities
  -formation of criteria for staffing and assignments
  -allocation of budget

"School-based management is a model which the Forum believes holds promise and deserves to be tested and developed through pilot projects. Under this scheme, responsibility for deciding how best to help students achieve learning goals rests with that school's community."
Learning for the Future: Can Corporate-Higher Education Forum, 1990

  Training for both schools and district staff will be required to ensure school councils and administration can work effectively and adjust to new roles of collaborative decision-making. It may take up to 3 years to fully implement successful site-base management, and not all schools will be at the same level of readiness. There is a growing body of research on successful SBM practices and professional development materials available to support school councils.

- **Legislative Change**

  Implementation of this proposal would not require major changes to the existing School Act. Some provisions would require expanding, perhaps through ministerial orders, to strengthen results-based reporting, permit the ability of schools to purchase health and social services and to define the constitution and authority of *School Councils*. Other changes required to implement this model would be addressed through school district policy and collective agreements with employee groups.

"We agree the best way to improve standards, introduce accountability and increase parent involvement in the system is to introduce site-based management."
B.C. Chamber of Commerce Education Committee, 1997

• Labour Relations

The collective bargaining process must change to support school transformation in a decentralized system.

"If schools are governed in a collegial, professional and democratic manner, there is no reason for unions to insist that rules in a central contract take precedence over the judgment of the members in each school."

American Federation of Teachers' Policy, 1994

It must accommodate the principles of school-based management to ensure the flexibility required at the school level in budget and program delivery decisions is not hampered by overly-restrictive central agreements. Issues such as length of school day, school year and class sizes could become school specific within minimum provincial guidelines. Waivers from any provincial or local contract provisions to permit individual schools to innovate might be obtained upon majority vote of a school staff. There are precedents for unions granting such flexibility at the request of its members.

Collective agreements must also be revisited to enable effective leadership by school administrators. A January 1997 research study commissioned by the BCPVPA concluded that, *"School administrators believe their effectiveness would be enhanced by increased school-level control in areas of responsibility, particularly with respect to choice in the selection and continuation of staff and budgeting. Teacher contracts which hamper free choice of staff are seen as inhibiting the ability to build a team in the school, or to develop a common mission. A number of administrators also indicated they would like to be able to replace teachers whose effectiveness is questionable."*

Teacher contracts which hamper the free choice of staff are seen as inhibiting the ability to build a team in the school, or develop a common mission.

Bogyar, 1997: Time utilization of Principals and Vice-Principals in B.C.

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V. Recommendations

Excellence in education must be the top priority of policymakers. The proposed model offers a roadmap for reinvigorating our schools. The redesigned roles and responsibilities will enable us to build a public education system focused on results. It will unleash powerful energies and harness commitment to create highly successful schools and students for the twenty-first century.

To accomplish this goal, we make the following recommendations:

1. **Re-assign functions of ministry, boards and schools as outlined**

2. **Devolve greater authority and accountability to individual schools**

3. **Empower governing school councils and provide training support**

4. **Provide more learning options through open enrollment plans in all districts**

5. **Require annual performance-based reporting systems across all grades for all schools and districts**

6. **Create powerful incentives for performance and improvement of learning**

7. **Encourage community partnerships and integrated services in the schools to create more successful learners**

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Re-assigned Responsibilities

Ministry

- basic core curriculum
- standards, outcomes
- measurement and reporting
- provision of funding

School Boards

- distribution of funds
- outcomes and standards
- measurement and reporting
- implement school-based management
- provide school choice
- operate necessary district support services
- set overall operational policy
- community involvement
- incentives for performance

Schools

- develop, organize and deliver programs and services
- manage school funding to purchase best services
- measure and report student achievement against provincial standards
- attract clientele on basis of strength of programs, services and results

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